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September 6, 2000

FACT SHEET ON CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER WELLS AND INVESTIGATION OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION IN THE AREA OF WEST COLLEGE AVENUE AND CLOVER DRIVE, SANTA ROSA

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) is currently investigating groundwater pollution in the area of West College Avenue at Clover Drive in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California. The contaminant found in the groundwater in this area is a chlorinated hydrocarbon called tetrachloroethene, or PCE. PCE is an industrial solvent used for cleaning and degreasing and is generally associated with dry cleaning operations.

State and federal agencies have set standards for the contaminant levels allowable in drinking water. These standards are called Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) and define the concentrations of certain chemicals that are allowed in drinking water while still providing protection of public health. The groundwater around the intersection of West College Avenue and Clover Drive contains PCE in excess of the established MCL.

Detection of PCE in area wells to the north of West College Avenue occurred in 1995. A groundwater sample from a domestic water well located on Clover Drive north of West College Avenue was found to contain 33 parts per billion (ppb) PCE. The State of California Department of Health Services MCL for PCE is 5 ppb. Nine wells located to the north of West College Avenue were sampled, and PCE was detected in three of the wells. Results of well sampling efforts were provided to residents.

As a result of the detection of PCE in drinking water wells, Regional Water Board staff began to evaluate potential sources of the groundwater contamination. In 1996, sewer samples were collected to determine from where PCE was originating. Regional Water Board staff received this information, and continued its investigation of possible sources during 1996 through 1999.

A well was sampled by a landowner south of West College Avenue in November 1999, and PCE was detected. Regional Water Board staff collected a confirmation sample of well water that same month and found PCE at 37.3 ppb in the well. Subsequently, Regional Water Board staff conducted a door to door well survey in December 1999 and January 2000 in the West College Avenue/Clover Drive area in order to inform residents of a potential threat and to obtain permission for sampling additional private wells.

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Staff requested emergency funds from the State Water Resources Control Board for the purpose of paying for costs of water analyses. In August 2000, these funds became available and wells were sampled where permission had been granted. The first round of analytical results were reported in late August 2000 and show that a number of domestic water wells are impacted with concentrations of PCE at levels up to 306 ppb. **The level of PCE in well water poses a public health threat, and contaminated wells should not be used for drinking water.** Individual wells should be sampled to determine whether any contamination is present.

If you are a resident in the area and you pay a water bill, then you probably drink water supplied by the City of Santa Rosa. If you have a well, please be advised that there is no public water line in the county service area south of West College and including Clover Drive, Wild Rose Drive, and Blossom Way. In these areas, hookup to the City of Santa Rosa water supply currently is not possible. Alternative water supplies for persons not connected to city water at this time include:

1. Using bottled water
2. Installing treatment systems on private water supplies

As of this date, Regional Water Board staff continue to seek permission to sample wells in the West College/Clover Drive area in order to provide information to residents about the quality of their well water and to obtain more information about the extent of PCE contamination. The party or parties responsible for this pollution have not yet been identified, and the Regional Water Board will continue to investigate possible sources of the contamination. Once a responsible party (or parties) is identified, the Regional Water Board will take actions to ensure that a cleanup plan to treat the contaminated aquifer be developed and implemented to restore the beneficial uses of the water. The Regional Water Board staff will schedule and hold a public meeting this fall to explain well sampling results and the ongoing investigation. For additional information about this investigation or to request that your domestic well be sampled you may call Jo Bentz at 707-576-2838.

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